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## **Matt Boyd held out of Toledo start as Detroit Tigers ponder**

May 27, 2016

By George Sipple/ Detroit Free Press

TOLEDO -- Left-handed pitcher Matt Boyd was held out of his scheduled start today in case he's needed to pitch for the Detroit Tigers in place of Jordan Zimmermann, who is out with a mild groin strain.

The Tigers had the day off and begin a three-game series in Oakland on Friday. The Tigers had their probable pitchers left as to be determined, although right-hander Michael Fulmer confirmed he is starting Friday night's game.

Bench coach Gene Lamont, who will manage in place of Brad Ausmus, said after Wednesday's game in Detroit that he wasn't sure who would pitch on Saturday and said it was likely that right-hander Mike Pelfrey would start on Sunday.

Mud Hens manager Lloyd McClendon confirmed after Toledo's 5-4 win over Durham today that Boyd was still in Toledo and hadn't heard anything more from the Tigers, although assistant general manager David Chadd did enter the clubhouse following the game.

The Mud Hens did not make Boyd available to the media after today's game.

Before today's game, McClendon said: "Matt Boyd will not pitch today, given the circumstances of what's going on in the big leagues and the possibility Zimmermann may or may not make his start. Decided to hold (Boyd) off and make sure he's available in case they need a pitcher."

Boyd struck out a season-high nine batters in his last start last Friday at Lehigh Valley. He allowed two runs on six hits over six innings with one walk.

Boyd, 25, is 1-3 with a 2.06 ERA with a 1.15 WHIP in eight starts for the Mud Hens. He has 41 strikeouts in 48 innings.

Left-hander Matt Crouse was called up from Double-A Erie to make the start in place of Boyd. It was the first Triple-A start of Crouse's career.

Crouse, 25, was a 24th round pick by the Tigers in 2011 out of Mississippi.

He allowed two runs on six hits over four innings for the Mud Hens. He gave up one walk and struck out four.

The Mud Hens put right-handed pitcher Drew VerHagen on the seven-day disabled list to make room for Crouse. Asked what VerHagen's ailment was, McClendon said: "Don't know. He's going to Detroit today for an MRI and analysis. We'll probably know more tomorrow."

VerHagen, 25, has a 7.11 ERA in 19 games with the Tigers this season. He allowed one run in two-thirds of an inning in Wednesday's 5-3 loss to Durham on Wednesday, his first appearance this season for the Mud Hens.

## **ESPN analyst: James Shields a trade match for Detroit Tigers**

May 27, 2016

By Brian Manzullo/ Detroit Free Press

With almost two months of baseball over with, it's a good time to dream about possible Detroit Tigers trade prospects.

Jim Bowden's got us covered.

The ESPN baseball analyst entertained a few names that could be used as trade bait this July, given the current landscape of contenders, pretenders and expiring contracts.

The Tigers, once again, clearly could use some pitching help. They rank 24th in the majors with a 4.43 team ERA, with both starters and relievers struggling. Opposing batters are hitting .268 off the Tigers. That ranks fourth-worst in baseball.

Bowden floated out two veteran players who seem like good possibilities for the Tigers: San Diego Padres right-handed starter James Shields and Los Angeles Angels right-handed reliever Joe Smith.

"His \$21 million annual salary through 2018 will scare most teams off," Bowden wrote of Shields. "However, for the right prospect package, the Padres would eat enough to make a trade possible. ... Best fit: Detroit Tigers, because no owner is more willing to spend more money to win than Mike Ilitch."

Shields, 34, is 2-6 with a 3.06 ERA in 10 starts for the Padres, who are 19-29 entering Thursday night's games and dead last in the National League West division.

As for Smith, his season hasn't been very smooth, either -- a 4.30 ERA and 1.17 WHIP in 22 relief appearances -- but the 32-year-old has a 2.94 career ERA with the New York Mets, Cleveland Indians and Angels.

The Tigers (23-23) opted to sell off at last year's trade deadline, trading the likes of David Price, Yoenis Cespedes and Joakim Soria away to contenders, but they enter this trading season without expiring contracts as valuable as those three.

## Henning: Blue-chipper Fulmer learns the ropes

May 27, 2016

By Lynn Henning/ The Detroit News

Oakland, Calif. — Careers and jobs involve a certain amount of acceptance. It isn't so much that you hate certain tasks. It's simply that others can be more comfortable and gratifying.

If you are Michael Fulmer, a blessed power-throwing starting pitcher for the Tigers, the happier duties revolve around chucking a fastball at 97 mph. Or, if his heater isn't a better choice, a slider that looks for a nanosecond like Fulmer's fastball until it veers away on a sharp angle is a delightful option.

Where the job becomes less fulfilling, and more of a chore, is when the catcher calls for a change-up. That third pitch can be a little like taking out the trash. Nothing tough or arduous about it. But it isn't to be confused with fun.

Fulmer decided to roll up his sleeves and get busy with his third-pitch project in last weekend's game against the Rays at Comerica Park. He threw the change-up. Fairly frequently. And it was, in about everyone's view, the big difference in a solid start that showed how close to regular work in Detroit a team's top young pitching prospect has moved.

Fulmer, 23, and a rookie who has been in the big leagues for only a month, worked seven innings. He was nicked for a run, struck out 11, walked one, and got yet another big-league victory, his third against a single defeat in 2016, as the Tigers beat the Rays, 5-4.

He'll get his next start Friday at Oakland Coliseum when the Tigers play the A's in the opener of a three-game weekend series.

"I didn't feel any different, just more prepared," said Fulmer, a big (6-foot-3, 220 pounds) and bearded right-hander with a fierce mien and easygoing style, as he talked about last weekend's mindsets and emotions. Part of the preparation was his between-starts bullpen session. It was more like a rehearsal. Fulmer had to remember his lines, as it were, which in this case meant to follow a script that called for change-ups and more change-ups.

"I think I threw 30 in that bullpen," Fulmer said. "Usually, the entire bullpen might be 30 pitches. It (the change) has been a work in progress."

Rays off-balance

Why it worked against a Tampa Bay team that has shown a rare flair for offense in 2016 was easily explained. Rays hitters couldn't sit on Fulmer's either-or choices. While his fastball-slider combo can be a nasty 1-2 punch, big-league hitters can and do adjust to the hard stuff.

But mix in, like a third juggling ball, a change-up that creates more of a swirl for batters, and those words "off-balance" become part of a contented pitcher's lexicon.

Hitting a baseball is tough enough minus the stride-and-balance challenge presented by a change-up. That's particularly true when a change-up is dipping away from the hitting zone, which was the case against the Rays for Fulmer.

Fulmer says he had a not-so-secret weapon against the Rays. It was his catcher, James McCann, whom Fulmer calls "Mac."

"I think everything kind of clicked because of the situations when Mac called for it," Fulmer said. "I was always in total agreement.

"Now we both have opinions on when to use it. But we were so much on the same page. Mac, he knows so much about the game. And I'm trying to get there. But he's so knowledgeable and does so much advance study. "I even texted him after the game and said: 'Thanks so much for telling me what you thought was right.' We kept 'em (Rays hitters) off-balance."

Fulmer is adjusting to more of an equal-opportunity, three-pitch repertoire as he acclimates himself to other aspects of big-league life in 2016.

There is, for example, the matter of residence. He had an apartment in Toledo at the start of the season as he prepared for what figured to be a lengthy stint with the Triple A Mud Hens.

Now, he's living in a Metro Detroit hotel. And in what town is he bunking?

“I don’t even know,” said Fulmer, who says he has to “GPS it” to figure out the locale and its relationship to downtown Detroit.

His wife, Kelsey, is back home in Oklahoma City (Fulmer’s roots are in Oklahoma). She works as a registered nurse with her own career to nurture as her husband deals with the potential for some back-and-forth assignments at Toledo and at Detroit, depending upon how things go.

The Tigers, after all, know — and so does Fulmer — that life for a young pitcher is not to be confused with a job relocation. Rare is the starter summoned from the bushes (Fulmer replaced Shane Greene when Greene went on the disabled list) who sticks in the big leagues minus a trip or two back to the farm.

Say, in tonight’s game against the A’s, that Fulmer’s change-up doesn’t behave with the discipline it showed against the Rays. Greene is soon to return. Any raggedness in tonight’s start might spur the Tigers to give Fulmer a bit more time to age at Toledo.

Last-minute trade

Even if there is progress on a scale consistent with his start against Tampa Bay, the Tigers have another concern. It has to do with innings. And pitch counts. And over-stressing a prized arm that last season worked 124 innings between Triple A and Double A Erie, which is where Fulmer reported after he was traded to the Tigers in a deadline deal for Yoenis Cespedes.

It was a dramatic trade, only minutes before the inter-league trade window closed. The Mets were getting a slugging left-fielder who would help push them deep into the playoffs. The Tigers were losing a billboard talent that unofficially ended any thoughts they might contend in 2015.

But there was a strategy behind this swap, understood fully by the Mets and by then-Tigers general manager Dave Dombrowski.

Fulmer was not only a blue-chip prospect. He was royal blue. He had the capacity to be no less than a No. 2 starter, and soon, for the Mets or any team that might pry him from New York’s resistant hands.

Dombrowski played poker, daringly, as the clock ticked 15 minutes ahead of deadline. The Mets surrendered: Fulmer would be Detroit’s payoff for Cespedes, and at this stage, as Cespedes crushes pitch after pitch during a marvelous spring hitting run, neither team regrets last July’s deadline duel.

Fulmer is pleased, as well. He likes his new team. He loves pitching in the big leagues. As for how long he stays with Detroit, or how many innings he throws in 2016, he’ll allow others to decide what’s best for the team and for him. There will be no complaints either way.

“I’m just learning,” he said, with a smile that lit up his face, and made a pitcher’s Blackbeard the Pirate look appear less menacing.

The lessons will continue. And yet one wonders if hitters won’t be getting just as much of an education about a pitcher whose talent is so immense, and whose skill set seems to broaden with each start.

## **Tigers notes: Al Avila says Ausmus blowup was rallying point for latest stretch**

May 27, 2016

By Aaron McMann/ MLive.com

If the Detroit Tigers make the playoffs this season, Al Avila believes May 16 could be looked to as the turning point.

That was the day manager Brad Ausmus was ejected for arguing balls and strikes with umpire Doug Eddings and launched into his colorful tirade that quickly went viral. He also made it known pregame he was done talking about his job status.

"I think that day, it all came together for him and he just let it all hang out," Avila, appearing on MLB Network's "High Heat" with Chris Russo, said Wednesday.

"People like to say maybe that was the rallying point for the team behind their manager, and it could be so. But at the end of the day, you've got to give credit for the hard work and preparation of our team overall."

Avila, who has publicly backed his manager the last two seasons despite rumors of an imminent firing, complimented Ausmus for his work ethic and personal involvement with the players.

He still catches bullpens for struggling pitchers and throws batting practice to hitters that are struggling, Avila said.

"You know, it got really tough on him because the media was really hard on him," Avila said. "It just seemed like they wanted that to happen, for whatever reason. The thing is, he never deviated from his hard work."

The Tigers have won eight of their last 10 games, rattling off seven of eight after Ausmus' blowup, ahead of a six-game West Coast trip that begins Friday in Oakland.

Avila credits the improved pitching of Justin Verlander, hot hitting of Miguel Cabrera and the middle of the lineup, and the jolt of energy Cameron Maybin has provided for the recent surge.

Now it's about getting Mike Pelfrey, Anibal Sanchez and Justin Upton "over the hump," Avila said, before he can start to feel good about this team.

"I was very concerned," Avila said of the losing streak. "We were angry and we were not happy about what was going on. We were losing a lot of games. But there were a lot of close games also and we felt that - in a lot of these games - if a couple of things would have gone our way, we should have won some of those games. But obviously we didn't and we went on this losing streak that was really tough on all of us.

"We stayed the course, kept our head steady, kept focus and we felt we had a chance to turn this around, and that's the way it's worked out."

### **TIGERS NOTES**

**PARTIAL ROTATION SET:** Michael Fulmer is scheduled to start Friday's series opener against the Athletics, and Mike Pelfrey Sunday to close it, but Saturday remains up in the air as the Tigers figure out what to do with Jordan Zimmermann likely to miss his next scheduled start.

But here's a potential clue: left-hander Matt Boyd was held out of a scheduled start for Triple-A Toledo Thursday, and Mud Hens manager Lloyd McClendon told John Wagner of the Toledo Blade it was because of uncertainty over the Tigers' weekend starters.

Boyd is 1-3 with a 2.06 ERA in eight starts this season for Toledo, striking out 41 and giving up 42 hits in 48 innings pitched. He's made one big-league appearance this season for Detroit, pitching 4 2/3 innings April 24 vs. Cleveland.

Greene, recovering from a blister on his throwing hand, tossed a scoreless 3 1/3 innings in a 5-3 Mud Hens loss vs. Durham, striking out seven and allowing four hits.

In two starts, his first with Single-A West Michigan, Greene has not allowed a run, allowed six hits and struck out 12 over 6 1/3 innings.

No word yet on the next move for Greene, the right-hander who started the season as the Tigers' fifth starter while posting a 1-2 record and 6.48 ERA in three starts, but it's expected he'll make one or two more starts before he re-joins the big-league roster.

**AUSMUS RAISES \$5K:** Remember the hat and hoodie from his tirade Tigers manager Brad Ausmus decided to auction off for charity?

The auction ended Wednesday night, with Ausmus raising \$5,010.00 for the Detroit Police Athletic League's Tiny Tigers T-ball program.

The winner has not been announced, but he or she now owns the hat Ausmus tossed off his head and sweatshirt he infamously ripped off and covered home plate with during the Tigers' May 16 game vs. Minnesota.

Ausmus, of course, was suspended one game by the Major League Baseball for his actions and inappropriate language aimed at home-plate umpire Doug Eddings.

## **Detroit Tigers hosting 'Bark at the Park' dog night at Comerica Park**

May 27, 2016

By Aaron McMann/ MLive.com

Ever wanted to bring your dog with you to catch a baseball game?

Well, now you can.

The Detroit Tigers are hosting the first-ever "Bark at the Park" dog night at Comerica Park for their June 21 game against the Seattle Mariners, the team announced on Wednesday.

For \$40, a dog and its owner can gain access to the game, scheduled for a 7:10 p.m. start, and the designated dog party area.

What constitutes a dog party area? Water stations, dog restrooms and "other amenities," the team says.

After the game, with Comerica Park head groundskeeper Heather Nabozny and her staff ready for cleanup, the dog and its owner can run the bases.

A limited number of tickets for the event - required for participation - go on-sale at noon Thursday, May 26, at [tigers.com/dog](http://tigers.com/dog).

Make sure your dog's shots are up-to-date, too.

And on a leash. There's nothing worse than a dog on the loose.

Sixteen MLB teams hosted the 'Bark in the Park' program in 2015, and 12, including the Tigers, are on the schedule for 2016.

The event is part of a series of promotional days the Tigers have scheduled this season to help boost attendance. They held Polish American Day on Friday, have various "University Days" scattered throughout the summer to attract college kids and alumni, Star Wars Day and a game specifically for you "Yoopers."



## Maybin changes approach to fit Tigers' game plan

May 27, 2016

By Jason Beck/ MLB.com

DETROIT -- The conversation began with the spacious outfield at Comerica Park. It came after Cameron Maybin went crashing into the center-field wall to chase the Rays' Steve Pearce's drive last Sunday. It morphed into a talk on his history in big ballparks.

"It doesn't really matter to me," Maybin said, "because I just try to hit singles."

The 29-year-old Maybin doesn't only hit singles, of course, but it reflects his mentality on making contact. It's not what Tigers officials expected when they drafted him a decade ago. It's what they need him to be now.

The scouting report on Maybin was speed and power when the Tigers made him their top pick in the 2005 MLB Draft. Maybin came with a legend, a 490-foot home run in high school. He drew comparisons to Ken Griffey Jr., Preston Wilson and Mike Cameron.

Maybin's 14 home runs in 2007, his second Minor League season, was his high mark as a pro. Detroit called him up that August, and he homered off Roger Clemens in his second big league game.

"He was 20 years old," said Tigers bench coach Gene Lamont, who was on manager Jim Leyland's staff that year. "We brought him up as kind of a shot in the dark, because we just weren't playing as well as we thought we should. We thought maybe he could give us a spark.

"That's kind of what he's done here now, to be truthful."

Maybin has done so in a different way.

Though the Miguel Cabrera trade that sent Maybin to the Marlins gave him a chance to develop, he never reached double digits in home runs until last season. Injuries cut into his at-bats, and he had big home ballparks in Miami and San Diego, but his swing for power made it difficult for consistent contact.

Eventually, Maybin grew weary of the roller coaster.

"It wasn't until last year that I starting buying into it," he said. "I had to buy into the approach last year. It's fun. Consistency is fun. That's what makes me the most consistent. I just bought into it, and it worked."

Maybin credits Braves hitting coach Kevin Seitzer with the approach, taking what a pitcher and defense give him, staying disciplined and making his end goal to get on base.

"I know now the player I am," Maybin said. "It just allows me to just take full advantage of all my abilities. It allows me to have good at-bats. It allows me to give myself a chance to get on base. And if I get on base, good things happen. I've become OK with that."

Maybin hit 10 homers with Atlanta last year. He also hit .267 with a .327 on-base percentage, both career highs. Maybin took that approach into hyperdrive upon arrival in the Tigers' lineup last week. Of his 18 hits in 33 at-bats, 17 are singles, with one home run. Maybin has eight opposite-field singles and four more up the middle.

"Lot of space over there," Maybin said. "Why not try to hit it where more space is? I'll let Nick [Castellanos] hit all the homers."

When Detroit's lineup is clicking, it's tough. Maybin has reached base safely 21 times. He has scored nine runs, and he has just four strikeouts.

"I think he realizes now what kind of player he is," Lamont said. "Everyone wants a five-tool guy with a lot of power. Well, I think Cameron's realized he's not the power guy maybe people thought he was. But he uses his skills that he has. He knows what he is and he does a good job."

## Tigers' Cabrera takes hot bat to Oakland

May 27, 2016

Staff/ Associated Press

Miguel Cabrera is on the upswing and already victimized the Oakland Athletics last month.

Now the Detroit Tigers superstar may have a perfect opportunity to end his woes against left-handers when he faces Sean Manaea for the first time.

Cabrera and the visiting Tigers start a three-game set Friday night (9 pgame, 10:05 first pitch on FOX Sports Detroit) when they meet Manaea and the struggling Athletics.

Detroit (23-23) took three of four from Oakland at home from April 25-28. Cabrera went 5 for 12 with two homers, two doubles and five RBIs in that series, Cameron Maybin was 6 for 13 and Victor Martinez 5 for 11. Cabrera has hit safely in 10 of his last 11 games, batting .452 with seven homers and 15 RBIs. He homered twice with five RBIs as the Tigers took two of three from Philadelphia to cap a 7-2 homestand after Wednesday's 8-5 loss.

"It was a good homestand," acting manager Gene Lamont told the Tigers' official website. "Once you're 7-1, you want to go out 8-1."

Lamont was in charge for Brad Ausmus, who will miss the game to attend his daughter's high school graduation.

Cabrera is a career .316 hitter off southpaws, leading the AL in that department in 2013 at .368. That's why it's surprising that he's hitting only .219 off left-handers this year in 40 plate appearances.

He may like his chances of getting untracked against the rookie Manaea (1-2, 7.62 ERA), who is limiting left-handed hitters to a .130 average but allowing right-handed batters to hit .346.

Manaea yielded five runs over 6 2/3 innings in Saturday's 5-1 loss to the New York Yankees.

"I let my mind wander and I didn't get it back, that's completely on me," Manaea said. "I didn't execute the plan that we talked about before. It's something that I need to get better at."

Batters putting the first pitch in play against the left-hander are 10 for 19 and 5 for 8 when putting a 1-0 pitch into play.

The Tigers will counter with their own rookie in Michael Fulmer (3-1, 5.13), who won his home debut Saturday by yielding one run in seven innings with 11 strikeouts in a 5-4 victory over Tampa Bay.

The right-hander goes back on the road, where he posted a 6.52 ERA through four outings and failed to last past the fifth inning each time. Fulmer has never faced the Athletics.

Oakland (20-28) has dropped six of seven after a 13-3 rout by Seattle on Wednesday. The Athletics fell behind by six runs after three innings.

"At one point we came back it was 7-3 and we had a chance, and then it got out of reach a little bit," manager Bob Melvin said.

Khris Davis hit his 13th homer. The slugger went 6 for 17 with a homer and a triple in last month's series in Detroit.

Jed Lowrie was 7 for 15 in that series but Chris Coghlan was hitless in 12 at-bats. Coghlan is in a 1-for-22 slump.

Detroit's Ian Kinsler could return after missing two games due to the flu.

## Resurgent Verlander helps Tigers rebound from rough stretch

May 27, 2016

By Noah Trister/ Associated Press

DETROIT (AP) -- After allowing seven runs to the Cleveland Indians on May 3, Justin Verlander took to Twitter -- always a risky move for an athlete, especially one coming off a frustrating performance.

"I'm going to dominate soon! I'm close," his tweet said. "Doubt me if you want. We'll see."

Since then, Verlander has backed up his bold words, allowing just four runs in four starts to help the Tigers bounce back from an awful stretch earlier in the month. Although Detroit is only at .500, Verlander and Miguel Cabrera have given the Tigers a boost at a time when it looked like 2016 might turn into another lost season.

"They've been outstanding. They've certainly been leading by example," manager Brad Ausmus said. "Father Time doesn't stop for anyone, but I think these guys are far from dinosaurs."

It looked like Ausmus might be an early-season casualty when the Tigers lost 11 of 12, leaving the third-year manager's job in doubt. But immediately after that slump, Detroit won eight of nine, taking advantage of a home stand in which the schedule eased a bit.

Verlander and Cabrera have been at the center of that upturn. The two former MVPs, both 33 and signed to massive long-term contracts, are crucial for the Tigers as they try to rebound from a last-place finish in 2015. If Verlander and Cabrera struggle, Detroit will have invested a lot of money for not enough return -- at a time when there are other trouble spots on the roster.

After that game against Cleveland in early May, Verlander was 2-3 with a 6.49 ERA, and Cabrera was hitting a fairly quiet .276. In his last four starts, Verlander has 37 strikeouts in 30 1-3 innings. Cabrera, meanwhile, is hitting .389 with seven home runs and 18 RBIs over his last 15 games.

Although the Tigers (23-23) wrapped up an impressive home stand with a loss to Philadelphia on Wednesday, they were only three games behind the first-place Chicago White Sox in the AL Central entering Thursday.

"I think we're playing the way we expected to. Obviously, everybody wanted to harp on when we weren't playing well, and I touched on how the veterans in this clubhouse weren't going to let that get us down,"

Verlander said. "Guys are going to perform the way they expected to perform. It just so happened that nobody was performing the way they want to at the same time. That's tough to win that way."

In a victory over the Phillies on Tuesday, Verlander brought back memories of his MVP form when he was still throwing 97 mph in the eighth inning. He also made an adjustment to his slider recently.

"It's like a cutter when it's up, but when it's down it still has down slider action," he said. "I worked on it in the bullpen a while ago."

Having recovered quickly and impressively from an awful stretch, the Tigers will now strive for more consistency. This latest run of wins won't be the norm, but Detroit still has a chance for more success even as the team navigates a western road trip. The Tigers' next two opponents, the Athletics and Angels, both have losing records. Detroit starts a series at Oakland on Friday night.

With right-hander Jordan Zimmermann dealing with a groin injury, there will be even more pressure on Verlander to continue his recent surge, But he certainly doesn't mind that responsibility or the spotlight that comes with it.

That much was obvious when he sent out that tweet.

"It's just kind of a feeling that you have. I tweeted exactly the way I felt," Verlander said. "I felt more and more consistent every time I took the mound, and so that's why I said what I did."

## **Fernando Rodriguez is a major Tommy John success story, throwing harder and sharper than ever out of A's bullpen**

May 27, 2016

By John Hickey/ East Bay Times

Much has been made of the A's issues with pitchers having to undergo ligament replacement in the pitching elbow, or as it's better known, Tommy John surgery.

Jarrod Parker has not pitched since 2013, twice having undergone Tommy John surgery. This year alone, Felix Doubront and Chris Bassitt have had Tommy John procedures. Each man will miss all of 2016. Just when or if any of the three will pitch in 2017 is up in the air.

There is an upside to all this Tommy John angst. His name is Fernando Rodriguez.

Rodriguez could hit 96, maybe 97 mph on the radar gun on a good day in his first three big league seasons with the Angels, then the Astros. The A's picked him up before the 2013 with the id that he'd be a strong middle innings reliever, but almost immediately that was scuttled by his needing Tommy John surgery.

It's taken time, but Rodriguez is three years post-surgery, and he's a better pitcher now than ever. He routinely hits 97, even 98 on the radar gun with better control than he had before. And while the A's have plenty of end-of-the game pitching, they aren't afraid to add Rodriguez into the mix late in a close game. He's rewarded them with a 1-0 record, a 2.19 ERA and a WHIP of 1.014 while striking out more than one batter per inning.

"I'm throwing freer and easier now than I ever have," Rodriguez said. "I have always pitched with the idea I want to throw as hard as I can on every pitch, and now I'm throwing harder than ever.

"I know what these guys who have undergone Tommy John surgery are going through. I went through it. What I tell them when I talk to them is that it can be better than ever once you get back after all the rehab and the hard work of getting back after the surgery."

And it's not just a matter of pure velocity. There's the movement his pitches now have, particularly his two-seam fastball. It has a way of eluding bats, one reason his strikeout totals are above average.

Rodriguez never stinted on doing the hard work needed to get back. At the same time, he was never alone. He raves about the help he got from the trainers and medical staff and credits strength and conditioning coach Mike Henriques with devising a workout that not only rebuilt his strength but taught him about the best way to maintain his strength once he got it back.

"What he's doing now doesn't surprise me, because I saw how hard Fernando worked to get back," Henriques said. "Not everybody is going to come back from TJ surgery the way he has, but guys do have a chance to pitch well again after the surgery. It takes time, but he certainly has."

Henriques and the training staff came up with specific arm exercises to keep the arm loose and flexible. And Henriques successfully underscored the need for the 6-foot-3, 235-pound Rodriguez to keep his weight within the proper range.

And now Rodriguez is not just throwing as well as he ever has, he's serving as the-voice-of-one-who's-been there for Doubront and Bassitt as they start the long road back from their respective surgeries.

"I've told them there's reason for optimism," Rodriguez said. "They know it's not going to be easy, but Doubront and Bassitt are motivated. I think they'll be back better than ever."

Spoken like someone who's been there.

## **A's experimenting with 3B prospect Matt Chapman at shortstop**

May 27, 2016

By Joe Stiglich/ CSNCalifornia.com

A's third base prospect Matt Chapman, who was the talk of spring camp with his impressive glove and bat, is getting some time at shortstop.

That's a noteworthy development as the A's continue gauging the progress of all their left side-of-the-infield prospects, the most talent-rich positions in their farm system.

It doesn't signal a position change for Chapman, who is widely regarded as having Gold Glove potential as a major league third baseman. But A's officials clearly are intrigued to see how he looks at short while playing with Double-A Midland. Keith Lieppman, the A's director of player development, noted that Chapman appeared comfortable at shortstop when Midland employed an infield shift while he was playing third base. "It's all open," Lieppman said of the idea of Chapman at short. "Everybody who sees him play there says he's got great reactions, a big arm, good hands. So let's start playing around with it to see how good he can be there."

A side benefit to giving Chapman time at short -- it allows the A's to experiment with other infielders at different spots, and they always like their top prospects to be as versatile as possible. Shortstop Franklin Barreto, ranked Oakland's No. 1 prospect by Baseball America, has slid over to get time at second base, while another highly regarded shortstop with Midland, Yairo Munoz, has played a bit of third base.

Chapman, who led the A's in homers and RBI during Cactus League exhibitions, entered Wednesday night's play hitting .268 with Midland, second in the Texas League with 11 homers and leading the league with 56 strikeouts.

After two home runs, three RBI, two runs and a strikeout, he now leads the Texas League in big flies and punchouts.

Lieppman said a key for Chapman at the plate is using the entire field, something he did quite well against major league pitchers in spring training.

"I think he's gonna be a better hitter and cut down on the strikeouts," Lieppman said. "When he can stick with that (opposite field approach), he's really good. When he gets pull happy, that's when he gets in trouble."

## Madson's comeback inspired by teen righty

May 27, 2016

By Doug Miller/ MLB.com

EATTLE -- Ryan Madson pulls out his phone and scrolls down his contacts. He stops at one, "Lil Johnny," and smiles.

Madson knows that the comeback to Major League Baseball after three seasons outside those lines, the World Series ring he so improbably earned with the Royals in 2015, the three-year, \$22 million contract he signed with Oakland last offseason, the trust A's manager Bob Melvin has in him right now as his team's closer ... probably none of it happens without Lil Johnny.

He's Johnny Morell, now an 18-year-old right-handed pitcher for Basha High School in Chandler, Ariz. He's 6-foot-3 and 210 pounds, he threw a no-hitter in a March prep game, he's committed to Grand Canyon University, he has a fastball that's reached 94 mph and he could get selected in the MLB Draft in June.

Madson met Morell in Temecula, Calif., where Madson was hanging out at home in February 2014, being a husband to Sarah and father to five children and hardly ever thinking about the Majors after a blown-up elbow had sabotaged what had been a dynamic career at the game's highest level.

"I was just drained, spent," Madson said. "I had lost the passion for the game, and honestly, didn't think I'd ever get it back. But Johnny and I talk about this a lot ... we found each other for a reason."

Madson rose to prominence in the Majors as a setup man for the Phillies, using a power fastball and a Cartoon Network changeup to handle the eighth inning for the club that won the World Series in 2008. Madson was a dominant bridge to dominant closer Brad Lidge, and Philadelphia had a baseball-themed parade for the first time since 1980.

Madson parlayed that success into a full-time closer's role three years later and saved 32 games. But elbow ligaments snap, and his flamed out. Madson fell off the hardball radar completely in 2012 and '13, unable to cash in on opportunities from the Reds and Angels. And even after getting arm-healthy and fitter than he'd ever been with the help of a new exercise regimen he discovered at EVO UltraFit in Arizona in the fall of '13, he still didn't want to pitch.

But Morell did.

Former Phillies scout and Royals special assistant Jim Fregosi Jr. knew Morell, who was living in Temecula at the time. He knew the kid had a future on the mound, he knew his father, "Big John," and he knew that Madson was kicking around town, helping out Little Leaguers when he wasn't tending to his own flock.

The two were introduced and began working out together. The ball began exploding out of Madson's right hand again. With Morell's encouragement, the competitive fire returned.

And two years later, Madson is all the way back. The Minor League flyer taken by the Royals prior to 2015 paid off in a huge way. Madson made the team out of Spring Training, and he was topping out at 97 mph on national TV on the October stage.

The 35-year-old Madson earned his second World Series ring, another multiyear deal and the closer's gig in Oakland a few weeks into this season. Even after blowing a save in Seattle on Tuesday night, he has a 2.66 ERA, 11 saves and a team with a young bullpen to mentor.

That, after all, might be what Madson does best.

"You wouldn't know if he saved the game or gave up three runs," A's reliever Ryan Dull said. "He's the same guy, day in and day out."

Madson has been too far away from the game to not come back and be appreciative of everything he has. That attitude is rubbing off on everyone around him in Oakland.

"As good as his story is, he's even a better guy," Melvin said. "He's a terrific teammate, and on top of it, he's done really well for us."

LAST UPDATED: FRI, MAY 27, 2016, 01:32 EDT

FRIDAY, MAY 27, 2016

TEAM	PLAYER	TRANSACTION
<a href="#">Los Angeles Dodgers</a>	Julio Urías	Purchased From Minors

<a href="#">Texas Rangers</a>	<a href="#">Rougned Odor</a>	Starting to Serve Suspension
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THURSDAY, MAY 26, 2016

TEAM	PLAYER	TRANSACTION
<a href="#">Atlanta Braves</a>	<a href="#">Casey Kelly</a>	Sent to Minors

<a href="#">Atlanta Braves</a>	<a href="#">Héctor Olivera</a>	Starting to Serve Suspension
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<a href="#">Atlanta Braves</a>	<a href="#">Jim Johnson</a>	Sent to Minors, For Rehabilitation
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<a href="#">Atlanta Braves</a>	<a href="#">Chris Withrow</a>	Called Up from Minors
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<a href="#">Baltimore Orioles</a>	Eric Fornataro	Released
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<a href="#">Chicago Cubs</a>	<a href="#">C.J. Riefenhauser</a>	Outrighted to Minors
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<a href="#">Chicago Cubs</a>	<a href="#">C.J. Riefenhauser</a>	Called Up from Minors, - Not to Report
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<a href="#">Kansas City Royals</a>	<a href="#">Mike Moustakas</a>	Placed on 15-Day DL, (Torn right ACL - out for season)
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<a href="#">Kansas City Royals</a>	<a href="#">Brett Eibner</a>	Called Up from Minors
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<a href="#">Los Angeles Angels</a>	<a href="#">Erik Kratz</a>	Signed to a Minor League Contract
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[Los Angeles Dodgers](#)   [Luis Avilan](#)   Sent to Minors

[Miami Marlins](#)   [Nick Wittgren](#)   Called Up from Minors

[Miami Marlins](#)   [Bryan Morris](#)   Placed on 15-Day DL, (Herniated lumbar disc)

[Milwaukee Brewers](#)   [David Goforth](#)   Called Up from Minors

[Milwaukee Brewers](#)   [Chris Capuano](#)   Placed on 15-Day DL, (Left elbow soreness)

[New York Yankees](#)   Rob Refsnyder   Sent to Minors

[New York Yankees](#)   [Slade Heathcott](#)   Released

[New York Yankees](#)   [Richard Bleier](#)   Purchased From Minors

[New York Yankees](#)   [Álex Rodríguez](#)   Recalled From Minors, Rehab Assignment

[New York Yankees](#)   [Álex Rodríguez](#)   Removed From 15-Day DL, (Strained right hamstring)

[New York Yankees](#)   [Chasen Shreve](#)   Sent to Minors

[St. Louis Cardinals](#)   [Greg Garcia](#)   Called Up from Minors

[St. Louis Cardinals](#)   [Matt Carpenter](#)   Placed on Paternity Leave List

**WEDNESDAY, MAY 25, 2016**

TEAM	PLAYER	TRANSACTION
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[Atlanta Braves](#)   [Dario Alvarez](#)   Sent to Minors

[Atlanta Braves](#)   [Dario Alvarez](#)   Acquired Off Waivers From from Mets, NY Mets



<a href="#">Cincinnati Reds</a>	<a href="#">Anthony DeSclafani</a>	Sent to Minors, For Rehabilitation
<a href="#">Colorado Rockies</a>	<a href="#">Boone Logan</a>	Placed on 15-Day DL, (Left shoulder inflammation)
<a href="#">Colorado Rockies</a>	<a href="#">Jason Motte</a>	Removed From 15-Day DL, (Right shoulder strain)
<a href="#">Los Angeles Angels</a>	<a href="#">Cliff Pennington</a>	Sent to Minors, For Rehabilitation
<a href="#">Los Angeles Angels</a>	<a href="#">Kaleb Cowart</a>	Called Up from Minors
<a href="#">Los Angeles Angels</a>	<a href="#">C.J. Wilson</a>	Sent to Minors, For Rehabilitation
<a href="#">Los Angeles Angels</a>	<a href="#">Lucas Luetge</a>	Designated for Assignment
<a href="#">Miami Marlins</a>	<a href="#">Carlos Corporán</a>	Signed to a Minor League Contract
<a href="#">Minnesota Twins</a>	<a href="#">Darin Mastroianni</a>	Placed on 15-Day DL, (Left oblique strain)
<a href="#">Minnesota Twins</a>	<a href="#">Glen Perkins</a>	Transferred to 60-Day DL, (Strained left shoulder)
<a href="#">Minnesota Twins</a>	<a href="#">Buddy Boshers</a>	Purchased From Minors
<a href="#">Oakland Athletics</a>	<a href="#">Jed Lowrie</a>	Recalled From Minors, Rehab Assignment
<a href="#">Oakland Athletics</a>	<a href="#">Zach Neal</a>	Called Up from Minors
<a href="#">Oakland Athletics</a>	<a href="#">Jed Lowrie</a>	Removed From 15-Day DL, (Right shin contusion)
<a href="#">Pittsburgh Pirates</a>	<a href="#">Rob Scahill</a>	Called Up from Minors
<a href="#">Pittsburgh Pirates</a>	<a href="#">Kyle Lobstein</a>	Called Up from Minors
<a href="#">Pittsburgh Pirates</a>	<a href="#">Tony Watson</a>	Placed on Paternity Leave List

<a href="#">Pittsburgh Pirates</a>	<a href="#">Arquímedes Caminero</a>	Placed on 15-Day DL, (Strained left quad)
<a href="#">Seattle Mariners</a>	<a href="#">Luis Sardinas</a>	Called Up from Minors
<a href="#">St. Louis Cardinals</a>	<a href="#">Mitch Harris</a>	Transferred to 60-Day DL, (Nerve issues, right elbow)
<a href="#">Tampa Bay Rays</a>	<a href="#">Ryan Garton</a>	Purchased From Minors
<a href="#">Tampa Bay Rays</a>	<a href="#">Jake Goebbert</a>	Designated for Assignment
<a href="#">Tampa Bay Rays</a>	<a href="#">Tim Beckham</a>	Sent to Minors
<a href="#">Toronto Blue Jays</a>	<a href="#">Devon Travis</a>	Recalled From Minors, Rehab Assignment
<a href="#">Toronto Blue Jays</a>	<a href="#">Devon Travis</a>	Removed From 15-Day DL, (Recovery from left shoulder surgery)
<a href="#">Toronto Blue Jays</a>	<a href="#">Pat Venditte</a>	Sent to Minors